

Emmy Hewitt - Tomboy, Civic Leader, Racer - Still Going Strong

By ORM MANHARD

"Emmy Lou, you shouldn't be doing this," her father-in-law admonished. "I know you love tennis, but this is way too soon. It's less than two months since William was born and here you are bouncing all over the court like a jumping jack."

"Don't worry, Gramps. I feel fine and the doctor said it was okay; the exercise is good for me."

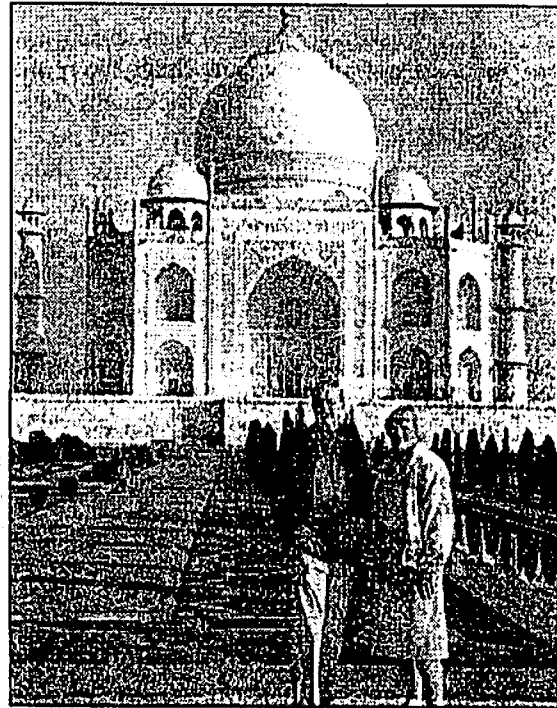
"The exercise may be good for you, young lady, but what about my grandson? Do you expect to bring him up on buttermilk?"

Emmy was unfazed and the baby thrived, whether on buttermilk or not. Emmy had always loved athletics - she skied her last competitive race at age 75!

Senior Scene

Emily Louise Richardson was born in Brookline on May 11, 1927. Perhaps she inherited her love and talent for athletics from her mother, who attended Bouve College for Athletics in Boston and loved sports as much as Emmy did. The family had a membership in a local tennis club where Emmy and her older sister, Henrietta, learned the game at a very early age. "I remember when I was only 7 or 8 Mrs. Wightman giving me informal lessons on her court," says Emmy. (Mrs. Wightman, a grande dame of tennis at the time, was a former champion who lived in Brookline and for whom the Wightman Cup is named.)

Emmy also showed an interest in boys at an early age. "School was just around the corner," she says, "and when it was time for me to go it wasn't long before I was bringing little boys home to play. I was an inveterate tomboy. Mother did not approve and soon I found myself transferred to Park School where I'm sure Mother hoped I would become a little lady. I stayed there through 8th grade and managed to earn high honors but I was still a tomboy." High school years were spent at Beaver Country Day School where again Emmy graduated with honors. Then it was on to Vassar where she was on the tennis and hockey teams and graduated in June 1948 with, as she says, "A B.S. degree in mathematics soon followed by an MRS" - she was married to Colby Hewitt in September, 1948.



The Hewitt's at the Taj Mahal in India.

Charles Colby Hewitt was brought up in Brookline, but the family moved to Marshfield in the thirties. His younger sister, Peggy, was Emmy's best friend at Beaver Country Day and Emmy first met Colby when she visited Peggy. Colby had just finished high school and been accepted at Harvard, but America was at war and he was determined to serve in the military. He was told his vision was not good enough but talked his way into serving in Army Supply in the China-Burma-India theater, one of the most difficult areas, getting equipment and supplies across the Burma Road or "Over the Hump." With the war over Colby returned, he and Emmy met again and suddenly there was greatly renewed interest between "Peggy's big brother" and the friend of "Colby's little sister." Colby entered Harvard on the G.I. Bill and as soon as Emmy graduated from Vassar and could plan her wedding, they were married. They lived in a small apartment in Brighton for two years while Emmy worked. Charles Colby Hewitt III was born in November, 1949, followed two years later by Jeffry Richardson. By then Colby had graduated and gone to work in the insurance business. They bought their first house, "A tiny house with a big yard," says Emmy, located in Wellesley. Soon their third child, daughter

Emily Coffin arrived, followed by William Winthrop and in 1960, Robert Caruthers.

By now the tiny house was bursting at the seams. Emmy was busy raising the children but still managed to tutor math on the side. With its big back yard their home became the neighborhood playground and was always filled with kids – an added responsibility for Emmy. She was relieved when in 1957 they moved to a much larger house on Sagamore Road in Wellesley.

When the children were old enough the whole family would go skiing. This continued until recently, with three generations of family taking winter vacations together. But the most memorable vacation with the children, Emmy says, was not on a ski trip but on an African safari. "Robert was 12, and our group was welcomed to one native village by a bevy of young ladies doing a tribal dance, topless! It was a scene right out of National Geographic. The expression on Robert's face was priceless. I thought his eyes were going to pop out of his head!"

Emmy's ties to Duxbury go back to 1948 when she and Colby, newly married, started summering in the area. Her father-in-law had bought land on the Duxbury-Marshfield line off Route 3A. Emmy and Colby fixed up an old building on the property and for the first few years it was their "summer home." Today the area is known as the "Hewitt Compound" and includes the homes of several Hewitt families. Emmy and Colby moved there year-round in 1976.

Emmy has always been active not only in athletics but also in civic affairs. But a most unfortunate accident in 2003 put an end to Emmy's tennis and skiing days. Playing at an indoor tennis club on a newly-installed surface – at age 76! – she took an extremely bad fall and shattered the bones in her left leg.

Off the fields, courts, links and ski runs Emmy was a leader in Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts, a trustee of Vassar College, president of the Boston Vassar Club, president of and head of the Finance Committee of the New England Farm and Garden Club for 20 years, and on the Board of Jordan Hospital for 30 years – and still serves as an advisor! Over the years Emmy has met four different presidents while they were in office. Three of them, presidents Carter, Reagan and Bush I she met at the White House. President Ford she met at his home in Colorado.

Emmy and Colby's long life together, 57 years, came to a close in 2005 with Colby's death. They planned to move to the Village at Duxbury and purchased their apartment in the new South Wing before his passing. They had many friends here, so Emmy followed through and made the move. True to form, Emmy has wholeheartedly entered into Village activities and says she loves it. Call her the "Unquenchable Emmy Lou!"

Elizabeth Dondero provides editorial assistance for this column.